

ABSTRACT

**[0033]** A telecommunications network (20) provides non-dedicated circuit connections between access nodes and switches of the network. A switch pool (24) enables the switches to communicate with access nodes disposed about a service area of the telecommunications network. The invention also provides methods of providing non-dedicated circuit pathways between access nodes (12a..n) and switches (14a..n) in a telecommunications network (20) having a plurality of gateways (28(a),28(b)). A media gateway selection node (22) provides a circuit connection mechanism and uses a gateway selection database (26) as a means for storing and accessing data and means for defining relationships among the media gateways (28(a), 28(b)), access nodes (12(a..n)) and switches (14(a..n)).